

## **MEAT AND POULTRY SLAUGHTER-PROCESSING-LABELING-MARKETING THE BASICS**

The Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship holds cooperative agreements with the USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service to provide a meat and poultry inspection program that meets the “equal to” provisions in the federal meat and poultry inspection acts. The dividing line between federal and state inspection is based on where the products will be distributed, as in interstate commerce and foreign export or intrastate commerce (Iowa only).

There have been numerous attempts to change the language in the federal statutes that prohibit the interstate sales of state inspected meat and poultry products. The prohibition is still in place.

**Interstate Commerce** – USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service  
USDA/FSIS Des Moines District Office – (515) 727-8960

**Intrastate Commerce** – Meat and Poultry Inspection Bureau  
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship  
Michael M. Mamminga, Bureau Chief  
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Animals that must (mandatory) be inspected under federal and state law before they can be sold for food: cattle, sheep, swine, goats, equines, and domestic poultry. The definition of domestic poultry in the federal rules was expanded to include the ratite family of flightless birds and young pigeon or squab as of April 26, 2001.

In addition to the species listed above, under Iowa state law, fallow deer, sika deer, red deer, or elk must be (mandatory) inspected before they can be sold for food in Iowa. Some states have laws that include other “exotic” species under mandatory state inspection.

Mandatory inspection is paid for through general tax dollars; there is no fee for mandatory livestock and poultry inspection. The fee for slaughtering and processing the livestock/poultry is between the producer and the establishment.

All other animals that are used for food must come from “an approved source,” under state food licensing laws, if they are sold to retail stores or places that prepare meals. An approved source may be a licensed food establishment or a licensed meat/poultry processing establishment.

***Voluntary Inspection:*** We offer voluntary, reimbursable inspection (\$25 per hour) to official establishments who want to slaughter and process quail, pheasant, buffalo, antelope, migratory waterfowl, and other members of the deer family. Many producers of “exotic” animals seek voluntary, reimbursable inspection so that they can “market” an inspected product, even though the “exotic” animal is not required to be inspected.

**Official plants:** These are establishments that have requested and received a Grant of Inspection. They must maintain higher standards of facility and responsibility including HACCP plans for all their “processes.” These establishments slaughter and process animals that are inspected and can be sold for food, process meat/poultry products under inspection, or both.

**Custom plants:** These facilities are in the business of slaughtering animals for the producers’ “exclusive use” in the producers’ household. The animals they slaughter are not inspected and the products from these animals are marked “NOT FOR SALE” (red meat) or “EXEMPT POULTRY P.L. 90-492” (poultry). Official plants are allowed to do “custom” or uninspected red meat for producers, but they must keep these products separate and apart from inspected meat and poultry products. Official plants may not process uninspected poultry. Custom plants may purchase inspected raw materials for further processing into retail sales.

Livestock and poultry producers often sell live animals to household consumers and arrange for the slaughter and processing at a local custom plant. The new owner or producer can have the animal slaughtered and processed without inspection for their exclusive use. If a producer wants to sell the carcass “off the rail” then the live animal must have ante- and postmortem inspection by an inspector in an official plant.

**Inspected** means ante- and postmortem inspection of the animals by federal or state meat/poultry inspection personnel in “OFFICIAL” establishments.

Both USDA/FSIS and the Iowa Meat and Poultry Inspection program offer voluntary ante- and postmortem inspection programs for some “exotic” species.

SALES IN INTERSTATE COMMERCE, MUST USE A USDA/FSIS INSPECTED ESTABLISHMENT FOR CATTLE, SHEEP, SWINE, GOATS, EQUINES, DOMESTIC POULTRY (INCLUDING RATITES AND SQUAB), AND THEIR PRODUCTS.

STATE INSPECTED CATTLE, SHEEP, SWINE, GOATS, EQUINES, DOMESTIC POULTRY (INCLUDING RATITES AND SQUAB) AND THEIR PRODUCTS MUST BE MARKETING WITHIN THE STATE OF IOWA ONLY.

**Labeling:** All labeling that bears a federal or state mark of inspection must go through a prior approval process that begins at the plant where the product is made and packaged. The labels must accurately reflect the product they describe. All labeling begins with a sketch approval that begins with the establishment owner and inspector filling out a label approval form. Labeling bearing a federal or state mark of inspection may only be applied at an “official establishment” and only the “OFFICIAL establishment” may use the label that contains the establishment number that is assigned to that plant.

**Private Labeling:** Whether processed in a federal or state inspected establishment, labeling that has a private business or company name may be obtained through an "OFFICIAL" establishment. This is referred to as "distributed by" or "prepared for" labeling. The mark of inspection will contain the establishment number for the plant where the product was actually processed, while the label itself will declare a statement such as "Distributed by Mike's Family Farm" or some similar statement.

Good communication is essential. If you have a question about meat/poultry processing, talk to us. Call this office or the USDA/FSIS office and ask questions. It is easy to answer a question and it is very difficult to fix a problem where product, time, and money are involved.

### **RELATED INFORMATION**

- 1. If you want to build and operate your own licensed meat or poultry processing establishment, contact Mike Mamminga for state inspection (intrastate commerce) or the USDA/FSIS District Office in Des Moines for interstate commerce. The facility information that is included, will offer some guidance, but it is not to be considered as complete in itself.**
- 2. All "OFFICIAL" products produced must have a label and must have prior approval and that starts at the plant level. A label must contain certain information.**
  - a. The name, address, and zip code of the manufacturer, or in the case of a private label, the phrase "Distributed by" or "Prepared for" followed by the name, address, and zip code of the responsible party. If your company is in the phone book, a street address is not required; if your company is not in the phone book, a street address is required. Phone numbers are options.**
  - b. The mark of inspection.**
  - c. A net weight statement.**
  - d. A warning statement – Keep Frozen or Keep Refrigerated – as applicable.**
  - e. The true name of the product.**
  - f. An ingredient statement if composed of two or more ingredients – the label approval process will identify an appropriate ingredient statement for state inspected product.**
  - g. A "safe handling label" on all raw products.**
  - h. Other information may be included on a label as long as it is not false or misleading. If you specify any "claims" you must be able to prove the claim. Point of purchase information such as signs and handouts are considered the same as labeling as far as the misbranding provisions of the federal or state acts.**

**IF YOU HAVE A SPECIAL RECIPE FOR A MEAT/POULTRY PRODUCT, YOU MUST SHARE THAT EXACT RECIPE WITH US. LAW REQUIRES US TO KEEP THAT INFORMATION IN A SECURE PLACE.**

3. **Exempt or uninspected poultry – federal law provides for the sale of some uninspected poultry, an exemption not provided for red meat animals.**
  - a. **1,000 birds per calendar year to household consumers only – keep records.**
  - b. **Up to 20,000 birds of your own raising in a licensed, exempt plant that you own and that's all you can do and no birds can be slaughtered for any other individuals. All birds must be labeled as "Exempt Poultry" P.L. 90-492.**
4. **While state inspected cattle, sheep, swine, goats, equines, and domestic poultry (including ratites and squab) are limited to intrastate commerce only, there are no restrictions on state inspected "exotic" meat/meat products entering interstate commerce. There are FDA limitations on the use of sodium and potassium nitrite/nitrate in "exotic" animal products sold in interstate commerce. We will advise on the label approval of this restriction, and leave it up to you to comply or not.**

**The following sheets will describe the facility requirements for an "OFFICIAL" red meat or poultry plant. Prior approval of blueprints is no longer required, but we will answer any questions you might have during your designing phase. It's much easier to change something on paper than to have to change a structure that has been built incorrectly.**

**If you are looking at opening an existing facility, contact this office to arrange for a facility review by one of our Supervisory Veterinarians. They will contact you to arrange a convenient time to meet and look over the facility and gather information to give you a report of any changes that would be required. There is no charge for this service.**

# **GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF AN OFFICIAL RED MEAT ESTABLISHMENT**

**The following facilities information is not to be considered as complete. These are basic guidelines for informational use only. Each facility must be reviewed by one of our Supervisory Veterinarians prior to start up, since facility uses and floor plans can vary so widely. Specific questions and details will need to be examined on an individual basis.**

## **SPACE**

Adequate space shall be provided in each department so that each operation can be conducted in an orderly and clean manner. The design should be such that it provides for efficiency of operation.

## **Plant Drainage**

1. All rooms except freezer and dry storage rooms must have floor drains.
2. Must have one drain for each 400 sq. feet of floor space.
3. Drainage lines must have an inside diameter of 4 inches.
4. Each Drain must have a P, U, or S shaped deep seal trap.
5. Drainage lines must be properly vented to the outside.
6. Drainage lines must be equipped with effective rodent screens.
7. Drainage lines from toilet bowls and urinals should not be connected with other drainage lines until outside the plant.

## **Floors**

1. Must be constructed of durable water-resistant materials.
2. Must be coved at juncture of floor and walls.
3. Must not have low spots that collect liquid.
4. Must be free of cracks and holes.

## **Interior Walls**

1. Must be constructed of impervious material.
2. Must be smooth and flat.
3. Must be free of cracks or holes.
4. Must be bumpered or curbed where necessary to be protected from damage by carcasses, tubs, carts, etc.

## **Ceilings**

1. Should be 10 ft. or higher in workrooms.
2. Must be constructed of impervious material.
3. Must be smooth and flat.
4. Must be free of cracks or holes.

## **Doorways and Doors**

1. Doorways where product moves must be 5 ft. wide.
2. Doorways where rails pass through must be at least 4- ½ ft. wide.
3. Doorjambs where rails pass through must be of smooth and impervious material.

## **Interior Woodwork**

Wood surfaces should be painted with a good grade non-toxic oil or plastic base paint, treated with hot linseed oil or with a clear wood sealer.

## **Stairs** (in edible product handling departments)

1. Must be constructed of impervious material.
2. Must have solid treads and enclosed risers.
3. Must have 6-inch side curbs of similar material.

## **Lighting**

1. 50 candlepower at all inspection and formulation points.
2. 20 candlepower in workrooms.
3. 10 candlepower at shank level in coolers.
4. 20 candlepower in coolers if used for offal or open product.
5. 10 candlepower, 3 ft. above floor in pens, alleys, of area where antemortem is performed.
6. 20 candlepower over entire area of suspect and restraint pen.
7. Where exposed product is handled, light fixtures must have protective covering, or shielding.

## **Ventilation**

Adequate means for ventilation from ventilating type windows, skylights, or mechanical means such as air conditioning, or a fan and duct system, should be provided in workrooms and welfare areas.

## **Refrigeration**

1. Wall coils or hanging refrigeration must have a drip gutter or impervious material integral with the floor and connected with the drainage system.
2. Floor-type refrigeration must set within a curbed and separately drained area or placed adjacent to floor drains.
3. If the facility handles or prepares both cooked and fresh products, separate coolers to provide for strict separation will need to be included to prevent cross contamination of cooked product.

## **Equipment**

Equipment used for preparing or storing product must be suitable to its intended use. It must be of acceptable materials and construction to be easily cleaned and sanitized. It must not adulterate product, nor constitute a hazard to the health and safety of the inspectors.

## **Livestock Pens**

1. Should be large enough to hold the maximum number of animals to be slaughtered in a single day.
2. Pens, ramps, unloading chutes, and runways, must be paved.
3. Must have suitable drainage facilities.
4. Must have suitable suspect pen.
5. Suspect pen, squeeze pen, and antemortem inspection area must be located under a weatherproof roof.

## **Rails**

1. Cattle bleeding rail must be 16 ft.
2. Cattle dressing rail must be 11 ft.
3. Cattle cooler rail must be 11 ft.
4. Beef quarter rail must be 7-½ ft.
5. Rails should not be positioned over tables, equipment work areas, etc., and must be at least 2 ft. from all walls or posts.
6. Hog rail must be 7-½ ft.
7. Header rail must be 3 ft. from wall and posts.

## **Processing Area**

1. Should be kept at a temperature of less than 50 F., or establishment must have a mid-shift cleanup.
2. Must have a sterilizer.
3. Must have other than hand-operated washbasin, liquid soap dispenser, disposable towel dispenser, and metal receptacle for used towels.
4. Must have an equipment wash sink to wash utensils and small equipment (this can be located in other than processing area).
5. Cutting and boning boards must be of approved material, and easily removed for cleaning.
6. All shelves, storage racks, etc., should be of metal or other approved material and at least 12 inches off the floor.
7. Since a thorough cleanup is required when going from "pork" to "beef" when processing, some plants will want to have a cutting and boning table and a saw for both pork and beef, thus eliminating this necessity.

### **Slaughter Area**

1. Must have a sterilizer.
2. Must have a viscera truck or pan.
3. Must have other than hand-operated washbasin, liquid soap dispenser, disposable towel dispenser, and metal receptacle for used towels.
4. All shelves, storage racks, etc., should be of metal and at least 12 inches off the floor.

### **Inedible Product Area**

1. Should be suitably located at rear of plant to avoid odors.
2. If connected to kill floor, must have a self-closing door.
3. If inedible material is not disposed of promptly, it must be refrigerated.
4. Means provided for denaturing.

### **Welfare Area**

The establishment must provide an adequate area or room, separate from edible product departments for employee clothes storage and lunch breaks.

### **Toilet Room**

1. Must be equipped with sanitary flush-type toilet, acceptable foot- or knee-operated washbasin, liquid soap dispenser, disposable towel dispenser, and metal receptacle for used towels.
2. The door must be self-closing.
3. If toilet opens directly into a workroom, it must be separated by an intervening vestibule with a self-closing door. Natural or mechanical ventilator must be provided.

### **Shipping and Receiving Docks**

Adequate dust proof access ways should be available connecting the shipping and receiving area to public streets or highways.

### **HACCP (Hazard Analysis, Critical Control Point)**

HACCP is a food safety program. HACCP is an acronym for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point. This program is based on seven principles that include identifying potential food safety hazards in slaughter and/or processing, monitoring those hazards, and taking corrective actions when hazards are out of control. HACCP plans consist of a written plan that documents the manufacturing processes in the plant and keeping records of the monitoring of critical control points that control potential food safety hazards. At least one employee in the establishment must be trained in HACCP and be responsible for the implementation and management of the HACCP program. A written HACCP



plan must be completed before an official establishment can be licensed to operate. The establishment must take an active role in HACCP plan development, implementation, and the day in day out HACCP processes. The written HACCP plan can be written by the establishment or a HACCP trained consultant. The HACCP plan must be validated with in the first 90 days of operation and must be reassessed at least once every 12 months.

### **Sanitation Standard Operating Procedures (SSOP)**

SSOPs are documented procedures as to how the establishment cleans (sanitizes) the plant. This includes cleaning of all processing equipment, product contact and noncontact areas/surfaces and facilities on a routine basis and records that are kept to document that cleaning has taken place. This cleaning is a prerequisite requirement for HACCP plans. Sanitation is an important part of controlling food safety hazards. A preoperational SSOP is required in the plant on a daily basis. This is cleaning that takes place after all processes are completed for the day. More or less this cleaning is so that the plant starts up every day of production with a clean facility—thus the name Preoperational. An Operational SSOP is required in the plant for sanitation that takes place during operations. These types of sanitation procedures would include following good sanitary practice by employees, keeping trash picked up and general housekeeping preventing unsanitary conditions. Both preoperational and operational sanitation procedures are performed and monitored on a daily basis. SSOPs must be written before an official establishment can be licensed to operate.

### **Labeling**

All labeling devices will need to be approved for use prior to production and distribution of any products that they represent. The labels must accurately reflect the true name and ingredients of the product they represent. Each label, that bears a mark of inspection, can only be applied by the "OFFICIAL" establishment that the mark identifies by an assigned establishment number.

### **Application and Grant of Inspection**

1. An application and Form BC-1 (Business Classification Form) requesting inspection must be filled out and submitted to the Des Moines office before inspection will be granted.
2. Notice in writing shall be given to each applicant granted inspection. The Administrator is authorized to grant inspection upon his determination that the applicant and the establishment are eligible therefor.

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF AN OFFICIAL POULTRY ESTABLISHMENT**

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### **Floors**

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### **Interior Walls**

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2. Must be smooth and flat.
3. Must be free of cracks or holes.
4. Must be bumpered or curbed where necessary to be protected from damage by carcasses, tubs, carts, etc.

### **Ceilings**

1. Should be 10 ft. or higher in workrooms.
2. Must be constructed of impervious material.
3. Must be smooth and flat.
4. Must be free of cracks or holes.

## **Doorways and Doors**

1. Doorways where product moves must be 5 ft. wide.
2. Doorways where rails pass through must be at least 4 ½ ft. wide.
3. Door jambs where rails pass through must be of smooth and impervious material.

## **Interior Woodwork**

Wood surfaces should be painted with a good grade nontoxic oil or plastic base paint, treated with hot linseed oil or with a clear wood sealer.

## **Stairs** (in edible product handling departments)

1. Must be constructed of impervious material.
2. Must have solid treads and enclosed risers.
3. Must have 6-inch side curbs of similar material.

## **Lighting**

Adequate lighting must be provided to all areas where edible product is examined, processed, or stored; where equipment and utensils are washed; in dressing and restrooms; and in hand washing area. Where exposed product is handled, light fixtures must have a protective covering, or be shielded.

## **Ventilation**

Adequate means for ventilation from ventilating-type windows, skylights, or mechanical means such as air conditioning, or a fan and duct system, should be provided in workrooms and welfare areas.

## **Refrigeration**

1. Wall coils or hanging refrigeration must have a drip gutter of impervious material integral with the floor and connected with the drainage system.
2. Floor-type refrigeration must set within curbed and separately drained area or placed adjacent to floor drains.
3. If the facility handles or prepares both cooked and fresh products, separate coolers to provide for strict separation will need to be included to prevent cross contamination of cooked product.

## **Equipment**

1. Equipment used for preparing or storing product must be suitable to its intended use. It must be of acceptable materials and construction to be easily cleaned and sanitized. It must not adulterate product, nor constitute a hazard to the health and safety of the inspectors.
2. Slaughter, scalding, and picking operations should be separate from eviscerating, chilling, and packaging operations. In most cases, separate rooms must be provided.

## **Poultry Holding Area**

Pens, ramps, holding areas must be paved and suitably drained. If the holding area is enclosed, adequate ventilation should be provided and outside doors screened.

## **Slaughter Area**

1. Must have a sterilizer.
2. Must have other than hand-operated washbasin, liquid soap dispenser, disposable towel dispenser, and metal receptacle for used towels.
3. All shelves, storage racks, etc., should be of metal and at least 12 inches off the floor.
4. Scalding Tanks must be drained and cleaned daily. Clean (potable) water must be used at the start of each day's operation.

The scalding operation results in continuous contamination of the scald vat water with feces, feathers, and dust. Thus, a continuous replacement of the scalding water is necessary to prevent a buildup of such contamination. One quart of water overflow per bird per minute is recommended. The local inspector may determine if more or less is needed.

An overflow pipe at least 2 inches in diameter should be provided on the scald vat. The overflow outlet should be at the surface of the water in the scald vat so that feathers and other material collected on top can run off.

To prevent polluted water from being tracked into other parts of the establishments, overflow water from scalders should be drained directly into or in close proximity of a floor drain.

5. Mechanical pickers must be constructed for adequate dismantling during cleanup operations.

Accumulated feathers interfere with the conduct of operations in a poultry plant and represent an insanitary condition. Therefore, feathers must be removed from beneath pickers continuously or periodically throughout the hours of operation. A water-flushed valley drain may be used to remove feathers continuously. If a valley drain is not provided, the feathers must be removed manually. Perforated, covered containers may be used.

6. Blood and blood splashing must be confined to as small an area as possible. It is suggested that bleeding cones or a bleeding cabinet be used which drain into an attached container. Bleeding cones are desirable because they prevent the birds from fluttering, thus preventing injury and dust movement.
7. When wax is used in dipping operations, it should be prevented from falling onto the floor to avoid tracking wax into other parts of the establishment. Noncorrosive metal drip pans may be placed beneath the birds to prevent the wax from falling on the floor. In order that the wax be reused, the reclaiming process must be designed to remove feathers, pins, water, and other contaminants from the wax. Usually reclaiming is accomplished by heating the wax to temperatures around 265 degrees F. and by straining. Wax falling onto the floor may not be reused.

### **Processing Area**

1. Should be kept at a temperature of less than 50 F., or establishment must have a mid-shift cleanup.
2. Must have a sterilizer.
3. Must have other than hand-operated washbasin, liquid soap dispenser, disposable towel dispenser, and metal receptacle for used towels.
4. Must have an equipment wash sink to wash utensils and small equipment (this can be located in other than processing area).
5. Cutting and boning boards must be of approved material, and easily removed for cleaning.
6. All shelves, storage racks, etc., should be of metal or other approved material and at least 12 inches off the floor.
7. Bird washing. After evisceration and before chilling, each bird must be thoroughly washed inside and out with clean water. This may be accomplished by drop lines over the eviscerating table with spray-type heads.
8. Ice. Water for ice making purposes must be potable. Ice producing, storing and handling equipment must be inspected for sanitary conditions.

Water and ice storage must be on the premises, and must be adequately protected from contamination.

Ice making or storing facilities (storage bins, etc.) should be lined with stainless steel or rust-resistant material. The metal should be of a sufficient thickness to withstand repeated striking of a shovel without puncturing. Suitable perforated, rust-resistant, and removable metal drainage plates should be provided at the bottom of the ice storage compartment, and frequently inspected to assure cleanliness.

9. When birds are chilled in tanks of water or ice and water, the tanks must be overflowed with clean water. The volume of water used should be sufficient to keep the chill water clean. Back siphonage must be avoided. Water lines used for overflowing the chill tanks must not be suspended in the water unless back siphonage valves are installed in the water lines.

### **Inedible Product Area**

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